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MX Basing Delay

Decision on basing the mobile MX missile has been put off again, this time to Aug. 14, the earliest date on which all the ranking civilians on the Presidential Review Council can get together. One legislative aide said, "They're taking advantage of the congressional recess, but they'll probably go for [the racetrack concept]."

Less certain is whether Congress will go for it (AW&ST July 30, p. 12). Sentiment is still strong there for the vertical multiple protective shelter (MPS) idea. One aide said MPS would be the cheapest and most effective of the numerous alternatives. He said the verification quandary could be solved by allowing the Soviets to count the missiles in a fabrication facility at each of the 200 missile sites. "Then we'd disassemble the facility, giving them greater assurance that we haven't filled every hole with a missile," he added.

Space Laser

Censored testimony by Defense officials before the Senate Armed Services Committee suggests the Soviets have conducted spaceborne laser experiments that could lead to antisatellite weapons, confirming an earlier AVIATION WEEK & SPACE TECHNOLOGY report that Pentagon officials believe the Russians have tested a small hydrogen-fluoride chemical laser on board the Salyut spacecraft (AW&ST Nov. 13, 1978, p. 14).

The use of space-based lasers as antiballistic missile weapons poses far more challenging tracking and control problems than such use does against thin-skinned satellites in stationary orbit or orbits that can be predicted, USAF officials indicated. Even with the orbital payload capabilities of the space shuttle, Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Stafford, USAF deputy chief of staff for research, development and acquisition, estimated it would be late in this century before spaceborne lasers could become an effective ABM defense.

—Washington Staff